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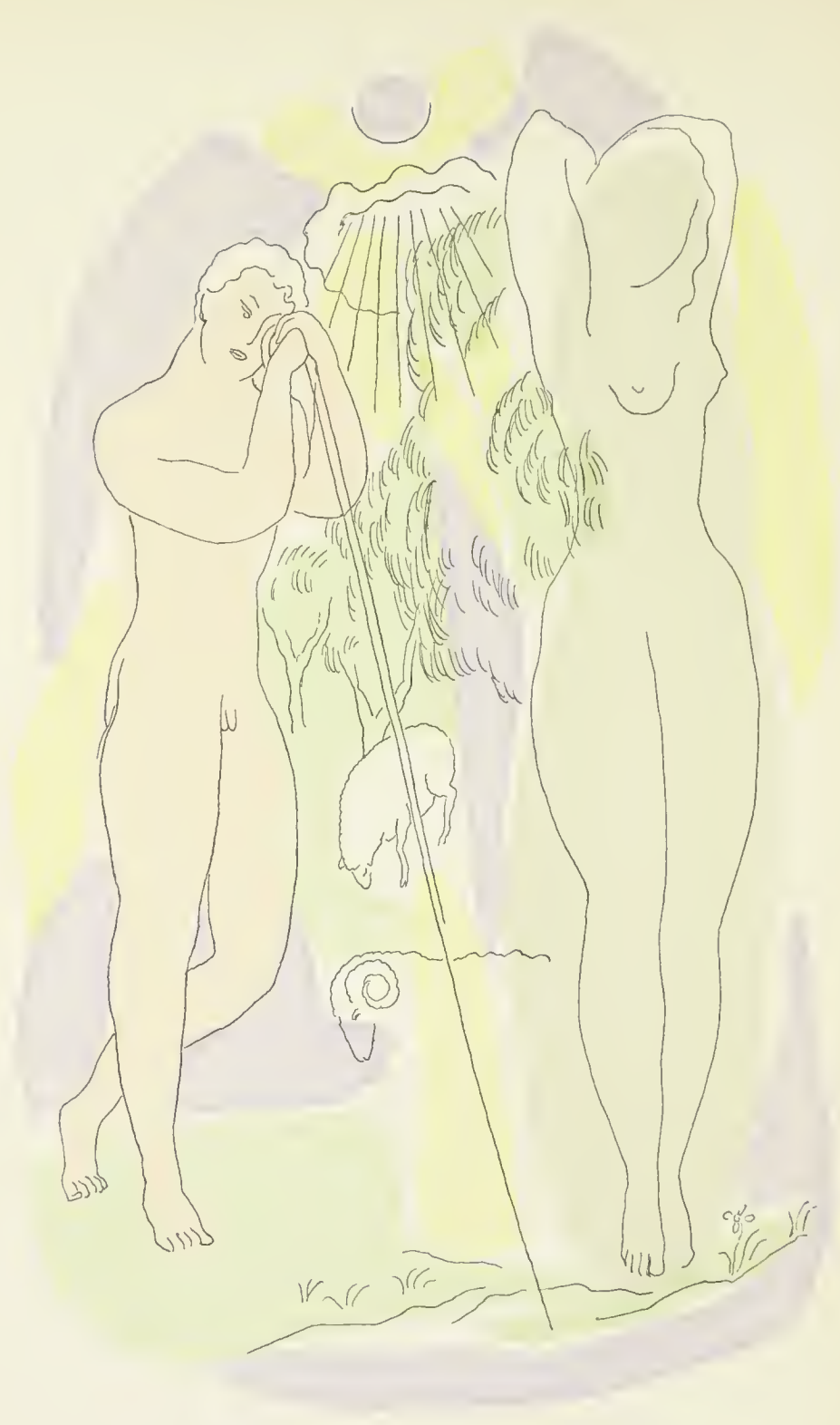
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Phillida and Coridon

AND OTHER PASTORALS

BY NICHOLAS BRETON

WITH DRAWINGS IN COLOR

BY ERNEST FIENE

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FOREWORD

During a life that spanned England's Elizabethan age, Nicholas Breton produced a vast amount of prose and verse. The great Elizabethan anthologist, A. H. Bullen, said of him that he "is as good an example as could be found of an Elizabethan all-round man of letters." His works include a novel, character sketches, dialogues, devotional tracts, a handbook of correspondence, proverbs, essays and lyrical poems. Yet today he is best remembered, when at all, for his verse and chiefly by a single poem. Of this poem it is recorded that "on Wednesday morning about nine of the clock, as her Maiestie opened a casement of her gallerie window, there were three excellent Musitians, who, being disguised in auncient countrey attire, did greet her with a pleasant song of Coridon and Phyllida." This and other of Breton's lyrical poems were very popular and included in numerous miscellanies and song books of the period. "Phyllida and Coridon" has subsequently been preserved in most general anthologies.

Much of Breton's work is of unequal merit and of value chiefly for its quaint historical interest. But in his lyrical poems and pastorals his faithful and very contemporary Muse often inspired him to exquisite flights of fancy and song. Pastoral poetry was much in vogue among Elizabethan writers, yet most of it is artificial

and more reminiscent of the drawing room than of hill and dale. Of this Breton was never guilty. He had a rare appreciation of "nature's delights" which he sang with a purity and richness that carries us joyously back to the pleasures of the country life and the idyllic state of the shepherd and his legendary shepherdess.

The details of Breton's life are meager and controversial. He was born in London about 1545 of a family whose ample possessions included a manor in Lincolnshire. It is probable that he attended Oriel College, Oxford and travelled on the continent. His mother married the poet Georges Gascoigne after the death of Nicholas' father and whether this relationship influenced Breton is a matter for conjecture. Breton's first book appeared in 1577, his last, "Fantasticks," was published in 1626 in the dimmer light of Jacobean England and his eightieth year, and since it is probable that so prolific a writer did not long outlive his pen this date has been accepted as the year of his death.

This volume comprises a small selection of Breton's pastoral poetry, modernized in spelling and punctuation. The poems have been chosen from several of his books, chiefly "Brittons Bowre of Delights," 1591, "The Arbor of Amorous Devices," 1597, "The Passionate Shepheard," 1604, and "England's Helicon," a rare anthology of the year 1600.

JOSEPH BLUMENTHAL

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PHILLIDA AND CORIDON

In the merry month of May,
In a morn by break of day,
Forth I walked by the woodside,
When as May was in his pride,
There I spied all alone
Phillida and Coridon.
Much ado there was, God wot!
He would love and she would not.
She said, never man was true,
He said, none was false to you.
He said, he had loved her long,
She said, Love should have no wrongs.
Coridon would kiss her then,
She said, maids must kiss no men
Till they did for good and all.
Then she made the shepherd call
All the heavens to witness truth
Never loved a truer youth.
Thus with many a pretty oath,
Yea and nay, and faith and troth,

Such as silly shepherds use
When they will not love abuse,
Love, which had been long deluded,
Was with kisses sweet concluded,
And Phillida with garlands gay,
Was made the Lady of the May.

A PASTORAL OF PHILLIS
AND CORIDON

n a hill there grows a flower,
Fair befall the dainty sweet,
By that flower there is a bower
Where the heavenly muses meet.

In that bower there is a chair
Fringed all about with gold,
Where doth sit the fairest fair
That ever eye did yet behold.

It is Phillis fair and bright,
She that is the shepherds' joy,
She that Venus did despise,
And did blind her little boy.

This is she, the wise, the rich,
That the world desires to see,
This is ipsa quae the which
There is none but only she.

Who would not this face admire?
Who would not this saint adore?
Who would not this sight desire,
Though he thought to see no more?

Oh fair eyes, yet let me see,
One good look, and I am gone,
Look on me, for I am he,
Thy poor silly Coridon.

Thou that art the shepherds' queen,
Look upon thy silly swain,
By thy comfort have been seen
Dead men brought to life again.

A SHEPHERD'S SONG IN A DREAM

Shall we go dance the hay? The hay?
Never pipe could ever play
better shepherd's roundelay.

Shall we go sing the song? The song?
Never love did ever wrong,
fair maids hold hands all along.

Shall we go learn to woo? To woo?
Never thought came ever to,
better deed could better do.

Shall we go learn to kiss? To kiss?
Never heart could ever miss
comfort, where true meaning is.

Thus at base they run, They run.
When the sport was scarce begun,
but I waked, and all was done.



A SWEET PASTORAL

Good Muse rock me asleep
With some sweet harmony,
This weary eye is not to keep
Thy wary company.

Sweet Love be gone awhile,
Thou knowest my heaviness,
Beauty is born but to beguile
My heart of happiness.

See how my little flock
That loved to feed on high,
Do headlong tumble down the rock,
And in the valley die.

The bushes and the trees
That were so fresh and green,
Do all their dainty colour leese,
And not a leaf is seen.

The blackbird and the thrush
That made the woods to ring,
With all the rest, are now at hush,
And not a note they sing.

Sweet Philomel, the bird
That hath the heavenly throat,
Doth now alas not once afford
Recording of a note.

The flowers have had a frost,
Each herb hath lost her savour,
And Phillida the fair hath lost
The comfort of her favour.

Now all these careful sights
So kill me in conceit,
That how to hope upon delights
It is but mere deceit.

And therefore my sweet Muse,
That knowest what help is best,

Do now thy heavenly cunning use
To set my heart at rest.

And in a dream bewray
What fate shall be my friend,
Whether my life shall still decay,
Or when my sorrow end.

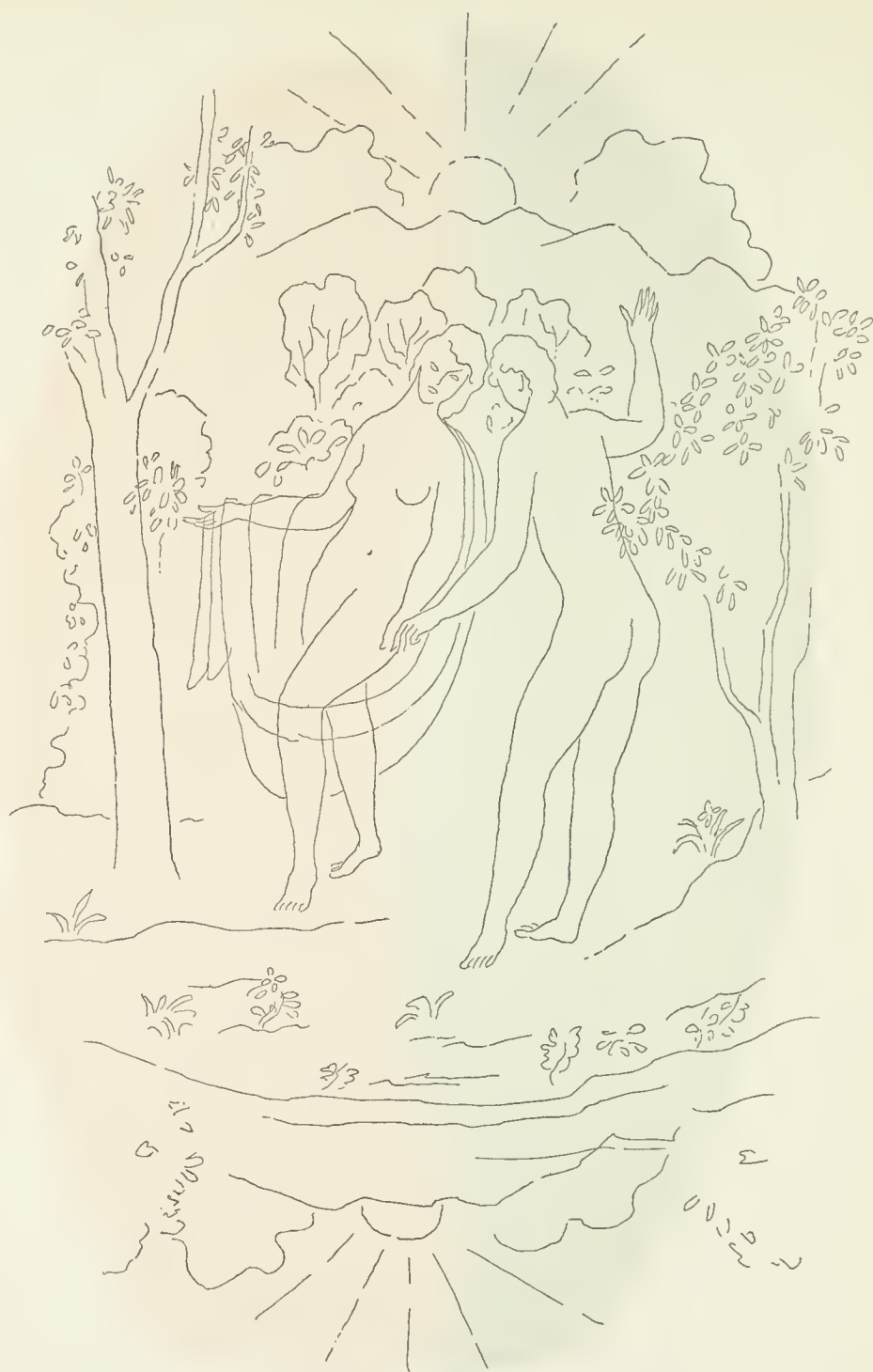
ASTROPHEL'S SONG OF PHILLIDA
AND CORIDON

Fair in a morn, (O fairest morn)
Was never morn so fair,
There shone a sun, though not the sun
That shineth in the air.
For of the earth, and from the earth,
(Was never such a creature)
Did come this face, (was never face
That carried such a feature.)
Upon a hill, (O blesséd hill,
Was never hill so blesséd)
There stood a man, (was never man
For woman so distresséd.)
This man beheld a heavenly view
Which did such virtue give,
As clears the blind, and helps the lame,
And makes the dead man live.
This man had hap, (O happy man
More happy none than he,)
For he had hap to see the hap

That none had hap to see.
 This silly swain, (and silly swains
 Are men of meanest grace,)
 Had yet the grace, (O gracious guest)
 To hap on such a face.
 He pity cried, and pity came,
 And pitied so his pain,
 As dying, would not let him die,
 But gave him life again.
 For joy whereof he made such mirth,
 As all the woods did ring,
 And Pan with all his swains came forth
 To hear the shepherd sing.
 But such a song sung never was,
 Nor shall be sung again:
 Of Phillida the shepherds' queen,
 And Coridon the swain.
 Fair Phillis is the shepherds' queen,
 (Was never such a queen as she,)
 And Coridon her only swain,
 (Was never such a swain as he.)
 Fair Phillis hath the fairest face

That ever eye did yet behold,
And Coridon the constant'st faith
That ever yet kept flock in fold.
Sweet Phillis is the sweetest sweet
That ever yet the earth did yield,
And Coridon the kindest swain
That ever yet kept lambs in field.
Sweet Philomel is Phillis' bird,
Though Coridon be he that caught her,
And Coridon doth hear her sing,
Though Phillida be she that taught her.
Poor Coridon doth keep the fields,
Though Phillida be she that owes them,
And Phillida doth walk the meads,
Though Coridon be he that mows them.
The little lambs are Phillis' love,
Though Coridon is he that feeds them,
The gardens fair are Phillis' ground,
Though Coridon be he that weeds them.
Since then that Phillis only is
The only shepherd's only queen,
And Coridon the only swain

That only hath her shepherd been,
Though Phillis keep her bower of state,
Shall Coridon consume away?
No, shepherd, no, work out the week,
And Sunday shall be holy=day.



A SHEPHERD'S DREAM

A silly shepherd lately sat
Among a flock of sheep,
Where musing long on this and that,
At last he fell asleep.
And in the slumber as he lay,
He gave a piteous groan,
He thought his sheep were run away,
And he was left alone.
He whooped, he whistled, and he called,
But not a sheep came near him,
Which made the shepherd sore appalled
To see that none would hear him.
But as the swain amazed stood,
In this most solemn vein,
Came Phillida forth of the wood,
And stood before the swain.
Whom when the shepherd did behold,
He straight began to weep,
And at the heart he grew a-cold,
To think upon his sheep.

For well he knew, where came the queen,
The shepherd durst not stay,
And where that he durst not be seen,
The sheep must needs away.
To ask her if she saw his flock
Might happen patience move,
And have an answer with a mock,
That such demanders prove.
Yet for because he saw her come
Alone out of the wood,
He thought he would not stand as dumb,
When speech might do him good.
And therefore falling on his knees
To ask but for his sheep,
He did awake and so did leese
The honour of his sleep.

CORIDON'S SUPPLICATION TO PHILLIS

Sweet Phillis, if a silly swain
May sue to thee for grace,
See not thy loving shepherd slain
With looking on thy face.
But think what power thou hast got
Upon my flock and me,
Thou seest they now regard me not,
But all do follow thee.
And if I have so far presumed,
With prying in thine eyes,
Yet let not comfort be consumed,
That in thy pity lies.
But as thou art that Phillis fair,
That fortune favour gives,
So let not love die in despair,
That in thy favour lives.
The deer do browse upon the briar,
The birds do pick the cherries,
And will not Beauty grant Desire,
One handful of her berries?

If it be so that thou hast sworn
That none shall look on thee,
Yet let me know thou dost not scorn
To cast a look on me.
But if thy beauty make thee proud,
Think then what is ordained:
The heavens have never yet allowed
That love should be disdained.
Then lest the Fates that favour love
Should curse thee for unkind,
Let me report for thy behoove,
The honour of thy mind.
Let Coridon with full consent
Set down what he hath seen:
That Phillida with love's content
Is sworn the shepherds' queen.

A SONG BETWEEN A SHEPHERD
AND HIS NYMPH

Say that I should say, I love ye,
Would you say, 'tis but a saying?
But if love in prayers move ye,
Will you not be moved with praying?

Think I think that love should know ye,
Will you think, 'tis but a thinking?
But if love the thought do show ye,
Will ye loose your eyes with winking?

Write that I do write you blesséd,
Will you write, 'tis but a writing?
But if truth and love confess it,
Will ye doubt the true inditing?

No, I say, and think, and write it,
Write, and think, and say your pleasure,
Love, and truth, and I indite it,
You are blesséd out of measure.



THE COUNTRY LAD

Who can live in heart so glad
As the merry country lad?
Who upon a fair green baulk
May at pleasure sit and walk,
And amid the azure skies
See the morning sun arise;
While he hears in every spring
How the birds do chirp and sing,
Or before the hounds in cry
See the hares go stealing by,
Or along the shallow brook,
Angling with a baited hook,
See the fishes leap and play
In a blessed sunny day;
Or to hear the partridge call
Till she have her covey all,
Or to see the subtle fox,
How the villain plies the box,
After feeding on his prey
How he closely sneaks away,

Through the hedge and down the furrow
Till he gets into his burrow,
Then the bee to gather honey,
And the little black-haired coney,
On a bank for sunny place
With her forefeet wash her face.
Are not these, with thousands more
Than the courts of kings do know,
The true pleasing spirits' sights
That may breed true love's delights?
But with all this happiness,
To behold that shepherdess
To whose eyes all shepherds yield
All the fairest of the field,
Fair Aglaia, in whose face
Lives the shepherds' highest grace,
In whose worthy wonder's praise,
See what her true shepherd says:
She is neither proud nor fine,
But in spirit most divine,
She knows neither lout nor leech,
But a sweeter smiling cheer,

She had never painted face,
But a sweeter smiling grace,
She can never love dissemble,
Truth doth so her thoughts assemble,
That where wisdom guides her will
She is kind and constant still.
All in sum, she is that creature,
Of that truest comforts Nature,
That doth show (but in exceedings)
How their praises had their breedings.
Let then poets fain their pleasure
In their fictions of love's treasure,
Proud high spirits seek their graces
In their idols' painted faces;
My love's spirit's lowliness,
In affection's humbleness,
Under heaven no happiness
Seeks, but in this shepherdess,
For whose sake I say and swear,
By the passions that I bear,
Had I got a kingly grace,
I would leave my kingly place

And in heart be truly glad
To become a country lad,
Hard to lie, and so full bare,
And to feed on hungry fare,
So I might but live to be
Where I might but sit to see
Once a day, or all day long,
The sweet subject of my song:
In Aglaia's only eyes
All my worldly Paradise.

WELCOME TO AGLAIA

Sylvan Muses, can ye sing
Of the beauty of the Spring?
Have ye seen on earth that sun
That a heavenly course hath run?
Have ye lived to see those eyes
Where the pride of beauty lies?
Have ye heard that heavenly voice
That may make Love's heart rejoice?
Have ye seen Aglaia, she
Whom the world may joy to see?
If ye have not seen all these,
Then ye do but labour leese,
While ye tune your pipes to play
But an idle roundelay,
And in sad Discomfort's den
Everyone go bite her pen,
That she cannot reach the skill
How to climb that blessed hill,
Where Aglaia's fancies dwell,
Where exceedings do excell,

And in simple truth confess
She is that fair shepherdess
To whom fairest flocks a=field
Do their service duly yield,
On whom never Muse hath gazed,
But in musing is amazed,
Where the honour is too much
For their highest thoughts to touch.
Thus confess, and get ye gone
To your places everyone,
And in silence only speak
When ye find your speech too weak.
Blesséd be Aglaía yet,
Though the Muses die for it,
Come abroad, ye blesséd Muses,
Ye that Pallas chiefly chooses
When she would command a creature
In the honour of Love's nature,
For the sweet Aglaía fair,
All to sweeten all the air,
Is abroad this blesséd day.
Haste ye, therefore, come away,

And to kill Love's maladies
Meet her with your melodies.
Flora hath been all about,
And hath brought her wardrobe out,
With her fairest, sweetest flowers,
All to trim up all your bowers.
Bid the shepherds and their swains
See the beauty of their plains;
And command them with their flocks
To do reverence on the rocks,
Where they may so happy be
As her shadow but to see;
Bid the birds in every bush,
Not a bird to be at hush,
But to sit, and chirp and sing
To the beauty of the Spring.
Call the sylvan nymphs together,
Bid them bring their musics hither,
Trees their barky silence break,
Crack yet though they cannot speak.
Bid the purest, whitest swan
Of her feathers make her fan;

Let the hound the hare go chase,
Lambs and rabbits run at base,
Flies be dancing in the sun,
While the silkworms' webs are spun,
Hang a fish on every hook,
As she goes along the brook:
So with all your sweetest powers
Entertain her in your bowers,
Where her ear may joy to hear
How ye make your sweetest cheer,
And in all your sweetest vein,
'Till Aglaia strike her strain.
But when she her walk doth turn,
Then begin as fast to mourn,
All your flowers and garlands wither,
Put up all your pipes together,
Never strike a pleasing strain
Till she come abroad again.

A LONG ENDURING PASSION

I have neither plums nor cherries,
Nuts, nor apples, nor strawberries,
Pins nor laces, points nor gloves,
Nor a pair of painted doves,
Shuttlecock nor trundle=ball,
To present thy love withal,
But a heart as true and kind
As an honest faithful mind
Can devise for to invent,
To thy patience I present.
At thy fairest feet it lies,
Bless it with thy blessed eyes,
Take it up into thy hands,
At whose only grace it stands,
To be comforted forever
Or to look for comfort never.
Oh it is a strange affect
That my fancy doth effect!
I am caught and cannot start,
Wit and reason, eye and heart,

All are witnesses to me,
Love hath sworn me slave to thee.
Let me then be but thy slave,
And no further favour crave;
Send me forth to tend thy flock
On the highest mountain rock,
Or command me but to go
To the valley ground below,
All shall be alike to me,
Where it please thee I shall be.
Let my fate be what thou wilt,
Save my life, or see it spilt,
Keep me fasting on thy mountain,
Charge me not come near thy fountain,
In the storms and bitter blasts,
Where the sky all overcasts,
In the coldest frost and snow
That the earth did ever know,
Let me sit and bite my thumbs,
Where I see no comfort comes:
All the sorrows I can prove,
Cannot put me from my love.

IN TIME OF YORE

In time of yore when shepherds dwelt
Upon the mountain rocks,
And simple people never felt
The pains of lovers' mocks,
But little birds would carry tales
'Twixt Susan and her sweeting,
And all the dainty nightingales
Did sing at lovers' meeting.
Then might you see what looks did pass
Where shepherds did assemble,
And where the life of true love was
When hearts could not dissemble.
Then yea and nay was thought an oath
That was not to be doubted,
And when it came to faith and troth,
We were not to be flouted.
Then did they talk of curds and cream,
Of butter, cheese and milk,
Then was no speech of sunny beam,
Nor of the golden silk.

Then for a gift, a row of pins,
A purse, a pair of knives
Was all the way that love begins,
And so the shepherd wives.
But now we have so much ado
And are so sore agrieved,
That when we go about to woo,
We cannot be believed.
Such choice of jewels, rings and chains
That may but favour move,
And such intolerable pains
Ere one can hit on love,
That if I still shall bide this life
'Twixt love and deadly hate,
I will go learn the country life
Or leave the lover's state.



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